



# RTU

Regional Training Unit

Information for  
Governors



## Professional Qualification for Headship in Northern Ireland

### PQH (NI)

NATIONAL  
PROFESSIONAL  
QUALIFICATION  
FOR  
HEADSHIP  
NPQH

# **The revised PQH (NI)**

## **Introduction by the Director of RTU**

The Department of Education's policy *Every School a Good School* sets the highest possible ambitions for all of our young folk. To achieve this, it is absolutely crucial that we have the best leaders running our schools. The identification, nurturing and development of a leadership talent pool to meet both current and future leadership needs is a key policy agenda for our schooling system given that more than half of headteachers in Northern Ireland will be reaching retirement within the next five to eight years.

Since 2000 the Professional Qualification for Headship (NI) (PQH (NI)) has been the primary vehicle for the identification and development of this leadership supply pool.

In many respects PQH (NI) has been a resounding success. Despite early scepticism the qualification has become the recognised pathway for those aspiring to headship. Nearly 45% of the 1550 graduates are now in Headship. More than 90% of graduates are in a more senior position within the schooling system than when they entered the programme. Recruitment into PQH (NI) has grown from 67 in its first year to over 230 by cohort 10, with year on year growth for the last four years.

However amidst the successes a number of key challenges have emerged. Our schooling system is encountering difficulties in leadership supply- with a growth in re-advertisements for headteacher positions and depleted fields of applicants. Too many of our PQH (NI) graduates are not entering headship either because threshold levels in terms of seniority prevent them from applying or they are overly selective for reasons of geography, sector etc in terms of the posts which will attract them. Also, our schooling system is changing rapidly. There is a need to revisit the crucial agenda of aligning leadership development provision to new organisational forms (e.g. collaborative learning partnerships); new curricular and assessment challenges; new demands in terms of accountability. There have been changes too in the pedagogy and methodology which attaches to best leadership development with a greater emphasis on workplace learning enhanced by coaching and mentoring techniques.

It was against this backcloth that we believed the time was right for yet another reappraisal of PQH (NI) (the third since its inception) aimed at effecting best fit between the qualification and the headteacher supply needs of the schooling system.

Following consultations with key stakeholders and a creative and energetic response from PQH (NI) colleagues I am proud to announce the successful re-design of PQH (NI). The re-design builds on the strengths of the current model but with more emphasis on the complexities and challenges emerging from a rapidly changing schooling system and ambitious reform agenda. Additionally the revised model is flexible and personalised allowing aspiring headteachers to both build on prior experience and take full control of their own learning.

Most significantly of all the revised model calls for an enhanced contribution from serving headteachers in building leadership capacity both for their own schools and for the system as a whole.

I believe that taken together the changes to PQH (NI) which we have effected will ensure that the headship needs both current and future of schools in Northern Ireland will be effectively met and that we will have a cadre of school leaders about whom we can be justifiably proud because they will deliver the effective schooling system to which we all aspire.

**Dr Tom Hesketh**  
**Director**

## Preparing for the future today

More than half of Northern Ireland's principals will be reaching retirement within the next five to ten years. As a school governor, you have a vital role to play in supporting future headteachers and contributing to ensuring high quality school leadership across the system.

"The best leaders grow future leaders. Your school can develop other leaders, Who will help transform the lives of many, many children and who will remember how the experience in your school influenced their leadership."

**Steve Munby**

**Chief Executive, National College**

PQH (NI) has been revised to reflect the changing role of headship and of school leadership in general. Principals today have new responsibilities and in the last few years there have been radical changes to the way schools interact with each other and with other services. The revised PQH (NI) will prepare aspiring principals for 21<sup>st</sup> century strategic leadership and management challenges.

### What is PQH (NI)?

The Professional Qualification for Headship in Northern Ireland is RTU's flagship provision for aspiring principals. PQH (NI) was launched in 1999 and has been highly successful in preparing individuals for the challenges and rewards of headship.

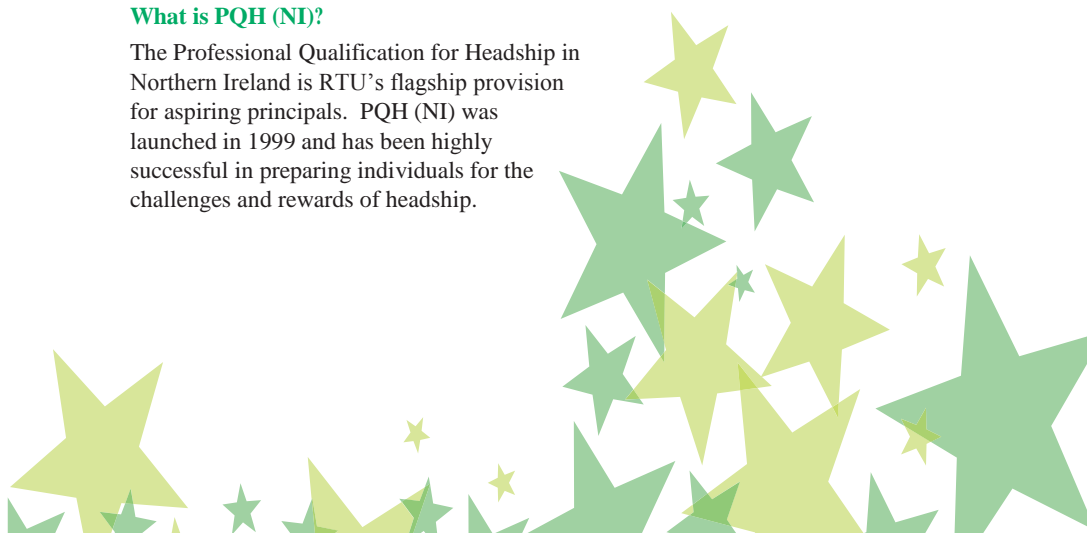
### Why is it changing?

Since PQH (NI) was last revised in 2002 headship has changed significantly and is now more complex, challenging and diverse. Principals and governors today have new responsibilities and in the last few years there have been radical changes to the way schools work with each other and with other services.

It is now time to revise the qualification again to reflect the changing nature of headship and school leadership in general.

The revised PQH (NI) provides aspiring principals with a flexible, personalised development pathway that will focus on their individual development needs and give them the confidence and competence to apply for their first headship immediately on graduation.

We need the support of school governors to sustain the flow of high quality school leaders into headship through PQH (NI), to ensure the best outcomes for all children, young people and their families.



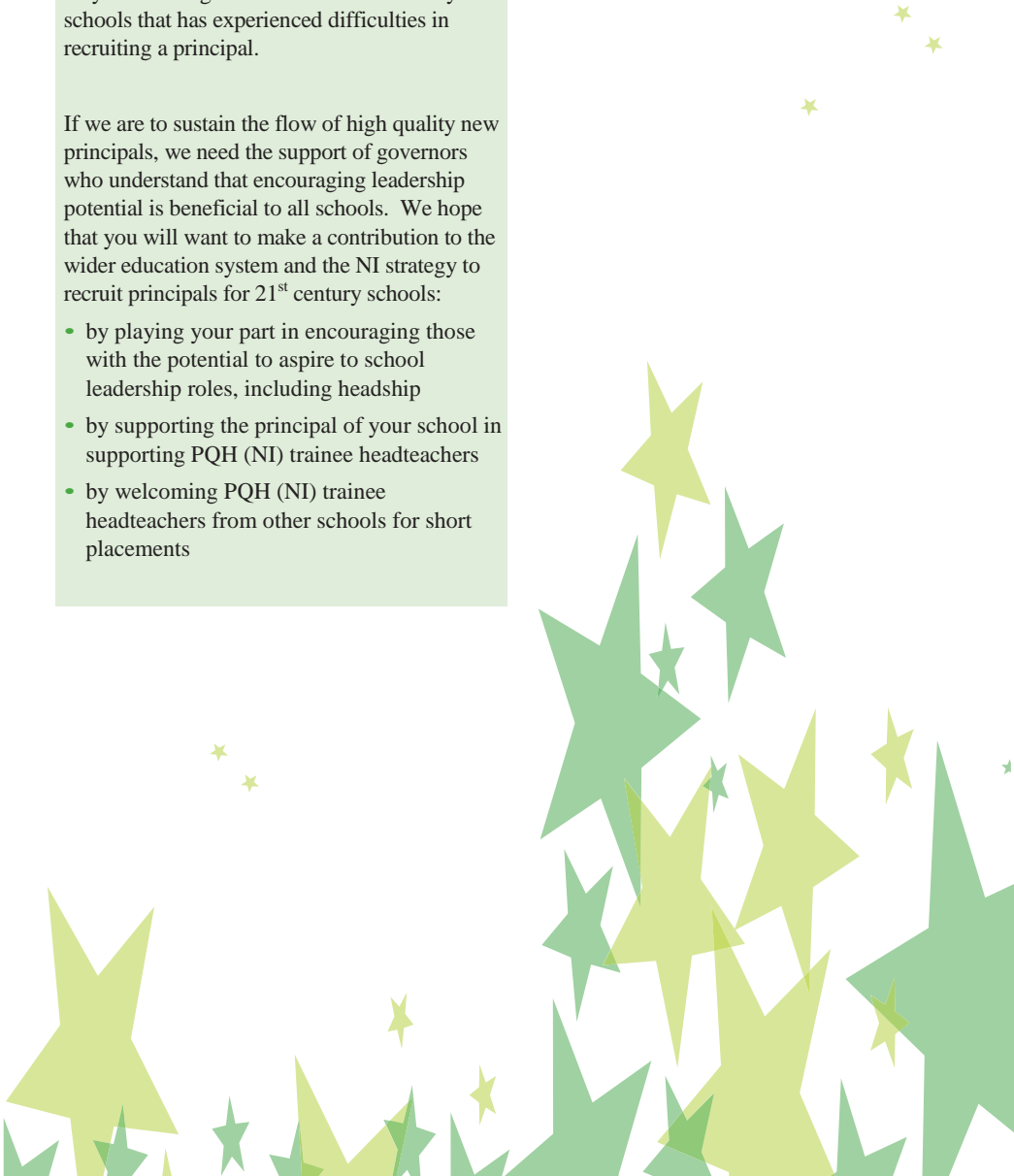
## How can governors help?

As a governor, you have a vital role to play in ensuring there are sufficient leaders who are ready to take up the complex and challenging role of headship. You will know from your own experience the importance of strong leadership from an effective principal. You may even be a governor in one of the many schools that has experienced difficulties in recruiting a principal.

If we are to sustain the flow of high quality new principals, we need the support of governors who understand that encouraging leadership potential is beneficial to all schools. We hope that you will want to make a contribution to the wider education system and the NI strategy to recruit principals for 21<sup>st</sup> century schools:

- by playing your part in encouraging those with the potential to aspire to school leadership roles, including headship
- by supporting the principal of your school in supporting PQH (NI) trainee headteachers
- by welcoming PQH (NI) trainee headteachers from other schools for short placements

You can find more information about PQH (NI) on our website at [www.rtuni.org](http://www.rtuni.org)



### Who is PQH (NI) for?

The revised PQH (NI) is for highly motivated aspiring principals who are no more than 12-18 months away from headship. It is no longer for those who just want really good professional development. To signal this change, PQH (NI) participants will be called trainee headteachers.

### What does the revised PQH (NI) look like?

The revised provision is designed to ensure that those close to headship have the knowledge, understanding, professional qualities and leadership behaviours to take up their first headship role, with the confidence to make a positive impact on their schools. PQH (NI) will also provide aspiring principals with opportunities to:

- reflect on their readiness to apply for PQH (NI), and therefore headship
- be assessed on their motivation and existing expertise
- prepare a personalised leadership development plan
- engage in a variety of leadership learning activities including online activities, learning with others, seminars and master classes
- take up a placement in another school context
- receive feedback and coaching

PQH (NI) trainee principals will present themselves for graduation 10-12 months after starting the provision and will be ready to apply for headship posts immediately. They will have the opportunity to continue to receive mentoring in their first headship, linked to performance management.

### How will your school benefit?

The redesigned PQH (NI) will benefit schools and governors in a number of ways:

- helping to increase the number of confident and competent leaders who are ready for headship
- preparing trainee headteachers to make a difference to the lives of hundreds of children, young people and their families
- ensuring that the supply of new principals can meet the needs of a variety of school settings
- ensuring that those entering headship understand the shared strategic partnership between the principal and the school governors



**The following diagram provides an overview of PQH (NI) and the pathway to graduation.**

### Pre-Entry

Applicants visit the pre-entry section of the RTU web pages to access a range of resources designed to determine their readiness for PQH (NI) and for headship.

### Entry

Entry is determined by a two-part assessment process:

- 1. Application:** completion of an online application with evidence of expertise and experience across the six key areas of the National Standards for Headteachers (Northern Ireland Edition). Applicants will also need a supporting statement from their headteacher or line manager.
- 2. Entry Assessment and Development Event:** if successful at application, individuals will be asked to complete a Personal Development Record (PDR) and a 360° diagnostic questionnaire before attending a two-day Assessment and Development event. The event consists of a range of activities designed to reflect the role of a headteacher and finishes with a one-to-one feedback session to agree individual strengths and areas for development. Once an individual has successfully completed both parts of the Entry Stage, he or she becomes a **PQH (NI) trainee headteacher**.

### Development

At the beginning of their 6–12 month pathway, individuals attend an **Introductory Day** to meet other trainee headteachers. Here, they find out more about the provision and consider what actions they will take to meet their individual development needs.

Each trainee headteacher will then determine their own personalised pathway, including:

- a **placement** in another context
- **peer learning** with other trainee headteachers
- **work-based learning** in their current school or organisation
- a range of regional and local development events, such as **conferences, seminars and master classes**

Trainee headteachers will be supported by:

- entitlement to up to seven hours of one-to-one **coaching**
- a range of PQH (NI) **facilitators**
- a range of RTU **learning materials, research and online activities**
- access to RTU's **online communities**, where they can engage in professional dialogue with a range of school leaders

As they progress through PQH (NI), they will build up a **portfolio of evidence** to demonstrate their learning in relation to their identified development needs.

### Graduation

When they think they are ready, trainee headteachers present a summary of their evidence to a **Graduation Board**. The board takes the form of a panel interview, with assessors including serving headteachers. If successful at Graduation Board, trainee headteachers will be awarded the **Professional Qualification for Headship (NI)** and confirmed through National Moderation.

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